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Apr 16, 1853 Rept 1-4

TO THE CENTRAL BOARD OF THE BENEVOLENT FRATERNITY OF CHURCHES,

The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE beg leave respectfully to present their First Quarterly Report.

It has been their object within the last quarter to give as much form and stability as possible to the relations of the Fraternity both within itself and to the community. They have ascertained that nine congregations have connected themselves with the Fraternity, by choosing each five delegates who have seats at this Board; that two, viz. the First Church, and the West Church, will coöperate in the support of the Ministry at large, but decline any immediate connexion with the Fraternity; and that two others, viz. the South Congregational, and the Hawes Place, have deferred action upon the subject, from particular causes and not from any unfriendliness towards the plan.

The amount of subscriptions cannot yet be determined. From the information however which the Committee have received they have no doubt, that the receipts the present year will exceed \$2000.

An arrangement has been completed with the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association, by which their interest in the Ministry at large has been transferred to the Executive Committee of the Benevolent Fraternity, under the condition that the latter assume the liabilities of the Ministry from the first of last May; from which time the Ministry is therefore supposed to have been under the charge of the Fraternity.

The Executive Committee have appointed Rev. Joseph Tuckerman, D. D., Mr Charles F. Barnard and Mr Frederick T. Gray, Ministers at large in this city for one year from the 1st of May, 1834, over which term of time only their authority extends.

They have after conference with these gentlemen voted their salaries, payable quarterly, as follows, viz. to Dr Tuckerman \$400, Mr Barnard \$1000, Mr Gray \$400.

Mr Barnard and Mr Gray being desirous to receive ordination as Evangelists, that they might in special cases administer the Christian rites, particularly the ordinance of baptism, which the usage of our churches precludes an unordained minister from administering, the Committee have approved of their wish, and prepared letters missive, which will be sent to the thirteen churches that were invited to form the Fraternity, requesting them to give their presence and assistance in a Council to be held for that purpose on the fourth Sunday evening in this month, October 26th, and have made what farther arrangements were necessary.

The Ministers at large have divided the city so as to give to each a particular district, viz. to Dr Tuckerman the central part, to Mr Gray the northern, and to Mr Barnard the southern. Mr Gray preaches every Sunday in the morning and afternoon at the Chapel in Friend Street, where a Sunday school is taught, whose members with their parents constitute the audience. After the first of November Mr Gray will also hold an evening service in the Chapel.

Mr Barnard has obtained from the city, free of rent, the use of the Ward room in Tremont Street, near Washington Street, where on Sunday he will hold the

same services as Mr Gray. A large Sunday school has been taught during the summer in the Hollis Street church, together with an Infant Sunday School in the Vestry, children from both of which will hereafter attend religious service in the room in Tremont Street.

The Executive Committee have not thought it best to impose any restrictions upon the Ministers at large, but prefer to leave the conduct of their ministry to their own judgment, with the understanding that it shall be pursued on the same general principles as have been observed by Dr Tuckerman and Mr Barnard in former years. The office in Tremont Street under the Savings' Bank is continued, and is found to be in various ways useful.

The Committee have stated that the receipts of the present year will probably exceed \$2000. They would add that a larger sum than this will be wanted. The expenses of the Fraternity this year may be estimated at least at \$2200; viz. Salaries of the three Ministers, \$1800; Printing the Semiannual Reports of the Ministers, \$100; Expenses of the Friend Street Chapel, of the room in Tremont Street, and of the Office of the Visitors of the Poor — not yet ascertained, but probably about — \$200; Incidental Expenses, \$100. The Committee therefore must urge upon the members of the Central Board the importance of exertion in securing a liberal subscription in their several congregations; and also of collecting and transmitting the amount of subscription as soon as possible after the present meeting, that the payments from the Treasury may be made punctually; which will be impossible unless attention be given to the subject, the funds now on hand being altogether insufficient for the purpose.

The Committee were directed to frame a code of By-Laws, which have been prepared and will be presented to this meeting.

The Committee having thus reported their proceedings during the first quarter of their connexion with this Board cannot refrain from expressing their joy, and their gratitude to God, that a plan which has seemed to them to promise much good to our city will at least have the opportunity of a fair and full trial. Dr Tuckerman has returned from Europe with his health, though not confirmed according to our hopes, yet so far restored that he can resume his duties, while Mr Barnard and Mr Gray devote their whole time and strength to the ministry. The poor are waiting to receive their counsels, and the rich are looking on with some, though it be a partial, measure of that sympathy which should bind the heart of every Christian to a work conceived in love and executed with fidelity. May the blessing of God give wisdom and success.

Boston, Oct. 5, 1834.

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TO the CENTRAL BOARD of the BENEVOLENT FRATERNITY OF CHURCHES,

The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE respectfully present their Second Quarterly Report.

The first great object of our organization having been accomplished, viz. the establishment of the Ministry-at-large on a satisfactory and permanent arrangement, our subsequent measures cannot have the same interest, and must be generally confined to those details of business which belong to every institution.

Since the last quarterly meeting, as is known to all the members of the Central Board, the junior Ministers-at-large have been publicly set apart to their office by the usual forms of ordination. Of the services on this occasion the Committee cannot forbear to say, that they believe them to have been conducive to the diffusion of that spirit of Christian philanthropy on which the support of the ministry to the poor must depend. As a wish was expressed by various persons for the publication of these services, so far as they could be given for the press, the Committee, doubting the propriety of an appropriation from the funds for this object, put a subscription paper in circulation, by which the necessary sum was at once secured. The Sermon and Charge (the gentleman who gave the Right Hand of Fellowship having declined to furnish his manuscript) have been printed, and copies may be found at the bookstores.

The first semi-annual Report of the Ministers-at-large

to this Board, which has just been published and distributed through the churches, presents a clear, and to the Committee a highly satisfactory, view of their operations for the last few months. As that Report has probably been seen by all the members of the Central Board, we need only allude to one or two of its topics. Of these none is more interesting than the service of which the Ministers speak with so much satisfaction — the preaching to children. The novelty of the attempts which have been made to furnish a religious service on the Lord's day, which while it shall observe the forms of worship common in our congregations shall yet be particularly suited to those whose early age prevents their deriving much benefit from the usual ministrations of the sanctuary, does not allow us to form a confident opinion respecting the usefulness of this new measure. Still may we not hope that we here behold the germ of an institution which will become, like the Sunday school, a permanent part of the means of religious improvement with future generations? The success of Mr Barnard and Mr Gray, and of another gentleman who some months ago introduced a similar exercise into the Sunday school of which he is superintendent at the north part of the city, leads us to anticipate important results, and must dispose us to watch this movement with much interest.

The Executive Committee, believing that the continual growth of the city must justify the establishment from time to time of new Sunday schools, requested the Ministers-at-large to turn their attention to this subject. The result of their inquiries has led the Committee to take such steps as will probably enable them to report at the next quarterly meeting, unless this Board should direct to the contrary, that one, if not two Sunday schools have been added to those now in connexion with the Fraternity.

The Executive Committee also desired the Ministers-at-large to make particular inquiries respecting the moral and religious wants of the colored population of the city. The facts which they have obtained are presented in their semi-annual Report.

The Committee would draw the attention of this Board to the Broad street Infant School, in the hope that the members will individually exert themselves in its behalf. We know not an institution in the city more deserving of support. It may be considered one of the fruits of the Ministry-at-large, and is intimately connected with the purposes of our Fraternity. The Committee recommend it to the sympathy and countenance of the individuals who compose the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches.

Since the last meeting of this Board the Executive Committee have received communications from the Trustees of the Friend Street Chapel in reply to an application for the transfer of their interest in that building. From these communications it appears that the Trustees do not consider themselves authorized to make a transfer of their interest in the chapel, but are willing to place it "under the care and at the disposal of the Executive Committee, to be used and appropriated by them for the free religious instruction of the poor of the city of Boston and according to their discretion, provided the said Committee keep the said building in good order and repair, insured against fire, and pay the expenses of the same from and after the first of last November while they shall so use it; the said chapel and land being subject to the legal rights of the 'Trustees.'" The Committee conceiving that this was a subject on which some members of the Board might feel a peculiar interest, voted to present these communications to this meeting for a decision, with a recommendation that the proposal of the Trustees be accepted.

We have received since the last meeting an official communication from "The Brattle street Benevolent Branch," informing us that on the 30th of November this Branch was regularly and fully organized. A note has also been received from the minister of the Hawes Place church and society, expressing their wish, for reasons of a local nature, "to decline for the present a formal membership with the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches." These papers will be read to the Board.

The design of which our Fraternity is the expression has thus far been successfully prosecuted, and its continual expansion through new forms of usefulness may be anticipated. We have now three Ministers-at-large, to each of whom a particular division of the city is assigned, yet acting in concert and devoting their days and their hearts to the moral and religious instruction of the poor; a central Office, in which they co-operate with other individuals engaged in the same work; two Chapels, in which religious services are attended on the Lord's day and evening by the class of persons for whom this Ministry was instituted, and in which a special service is also given to children; and two Sunday schools, each of which is well supplied with teachers and crowded with pupils. We have also, we believe, the sympathy of our fellow-Christians, the direct participation of a large number of the members of our religious societies in the support of these means of beneficence, and the attention of the community anxiously waiting for the evidence, which every month will furnish with increasing force, of the utility of our measures. We may then be grateful for the past, glad in the present, and confident as to the future; while we cherish his spirit who said — "I came to seek and save that which was lost," and rely on His blessing in whose name our Master spake.

Boston, Jan. 1, 1835.

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Apr. 16, 1855

TO the CENTRAL BOARD of the BENEVOLENT FRATERNITY OF CHURCHES,

The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE respectfully offer their Third Quarterly Report.

WITHIN the last quarter nothing has occurred which has called for the special action of the Committee, nor have they seen occasion to institute any new measures. They have therefore only to report, that the Ministers-at-large have continued their labors with their former diligence and efficiency, and that the usefulness of this ministry is every month rendered more apparent, that the Sunday schools which were in existence at the date of the last Report have been well attended, that a new Sunday school for the children of the poor was ~~opened this day~~ *will be* in a Primary-school room in the south part of the city, that sufficient payments have been made from the Branches to meet the current expenses of the Fraternity, and that, so far as the Committee are informed or can judge, the interests with which they are entrusted are in a condition of security and improvement.

At the last quarterly meeting the Committee were instructed to "inquire into the expediency of appropriate religious services for the children of the poor, with the evils which attend these services as now administered, and to present such information and suggestions upon

the subject as they may deem important for this Board to possess." They have attended to the subject, and are now prepared to present a Report drawn up by a sub-committee.

At the same meeting the Executive Committee were "advised to instruct the Ministers-at-large in connexion with this Fraternity, to ascertain as far as practicable, and report to this Board, the number of the poor under their ministry who neglect the religious observance of the Sabbath, and the causes thereof, and that a separate report be requested of each as to the best mode of remedying the difficulty." This vote was communicated to each of the Ministers-at-large, and from them replies have been received, which will be laid before the Board this evening.

The eleventh by-law provides that "the Executive Committee shall make such arrangements as they may deem best for a public annual meeting of the Fraternity on the evening of Fast-day." The Committee have accordingly requested Rev. Dr Channing to deliver a discourse on that evening, and having obtained his consent, they have procured the use of the Federal Street meeting-house for the purpose and have made other necessary arrangements. The members of the Fraternity will meet in this Vestry at 7 o'clock next Thursday evening to receive the Report of the Central Board upon their proceedings during the last year, and will thence adjourn to attend the religious services in the church. The delegates at this Board are requested to give notice to this effect to their several Branches. The Executive Committee, believing they should act within the design, if not also according to the letter, of their official duty by

preparing a report which the Central Board might, after such amendment as it may need, accept for their own, are ready to offer such a paper if the Board please to receive it.

The duties of this Board and of the Executive Committee whom they appointed are now nearly at an end. It is with pleasure that we observe in how favorable a condition we must leave the affairs of the Fraternity as they shall pass into the hands of our successors. For them we can only desire that they may continue to witness the successful developement of those principles on which and for which this Fraternity was established.

BOSTON, APRIL 5, 1835.

*Rev Theodore Parker
from his friend & brother
J. T. Sargent*

THE

FOURTH QUARTERLY REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OF THE

BENEVOLENT FRATERNITY OF CHURCHES.



BOSTON:

PRINTED BY ISAAC R. BUTTS.

1845.

from his friend
J. W. Parker

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J. W. Parker

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FOURTH QUARTERLY REPORT.

SUNDAY, JAN. 5, 1845.

THE Executive Committee beg leave to present the following Quarterly Report : —

The interests of the institution have been diligently studied, and though they have been exposed this quarter to a serious trial, yet the Committee have a good confidence that they have not been materially or greatly prejudiced. As will be seen by the items presented by the Treasurer, the finances thus far have been amply sufficient to meet the current expenses. A few of the branches having fallen short of their assigned quota, unless those that have not paid in their contributions endeavor to exceed or equal the amount appointed, the balance of the year may tell against the Treasury. There can be but little fear, however, of such a result. A few extra expenses have been incurred during the past quarter. Agreeably to a vote at the last meeting of the Board, the Reports then read of the Ministers at Large have been

published, and an extra number of the papers containing them were struck off for more general circulation. November 6th, a letter was received from Rev. Mr. Sargent desiring that the money appropriated by a vote of the Executive Committee, to the supply of his pulpit for a certain number of Sabbaths, and which had not already been so expended, amounting to twenty-five dollars, might be granted him to defray certain unusual expenses to which he had been subjected. At a meeting of the Committee, held November 7th, it was "*Voted*, That Mr. Sargent's request be complied with." It was also "*Voted*, That in consideration of the inconveniences and losses incurred by Mr. Sargent at the late fire in Dover Street, the Treasurer be authorized to present Mr. S. with a hundred dollars in addition to his regular salary."

During the past quarter an event has occurred of unusual interest, and which has already given rise to much discussion. We refer to the resignation of Mr. Sargent of his office as Minister at Large in connexion with the Fraternity. The circumstances relating to this event should be distinctly stated. On Sunday, November 17th, an exchange of pulpits took place between Mr. Sargent and Mr. Parker of West Roxbury. On account of the peculiar position which Mr. Parker sustains to the religious community, this exchange naturally caused much regret and pain to many friends of the Fraternity, who considered its best interests greatly jeopardized. The Executive Committee, learning the feeling which had been excited, and deeming it a matter in itself deserving their attention, held a meeting November 21st, at which, after much deliberation, it was determined that a communication should be addressed to the Ministers at Large, ex-

pressive of their views in relation to Mr. Parker, and of the grounds upon which his admittance to the pulpits of the Fraternity ought not to be desired. At a subsequent meeting, held November 22, the draft of such a communication was presented, and after a few slight amendments, was accepted and ordered to be sent. This course, for many reasons which seemed weighty to the Committee, presented itself to their thought as preferable to any verbal conferences. The communication was written in the freest and most candid spirit, the farthest removed from anything bordering upon dictation, or movement of heat or displeasure, or desire of controversy. It was not issued as an authoritative edict, from the seat of the directory, precluding all reply and demanding implicit submission, but simply as a friendly statement of the wishes and views of the Committee, fairly and reasonably set forth, and in a tone which, it was thought, would commend itself to the kind consideration of the Ministers. The following is a copy of the communication above referred to:—

“The agreement of the minister of Suffolk Street Chapel to make an exchange with the Rev. Theodore Parker, on the last Sabbath, considered in view of the sources whence the support of the Chapels is derived, and also in reference to the permanency and progressive usefulness of the ministry for the poor, has occupied the anxious attention of the Executive Committee, and after careful consideration, they have come unanimously to the conclusion, that no exchange of pulpits with Mr. Parker ought again to be assented to. The Committee have not kept out of sight Mr. Parker's position as an ordained

minister of an established religious society in the vicinity, nor his claim to respectful consideration as a man of learning and of irreproachable private life; nor, on the other hand, their own official position, in which relation only they appear in this matter. They are the executive functionaries of a Fraternity of Churches, all the pastors of which, and a vast proportion of their congregations, if not all, believe that the leading views of Mr. Parker are radically erroneous and subversive of the authority of scripture. These Churches apprehend that they are authorized by a legitimate construction of the Old and New Testament to believe, that our Almighty Father has been pleased to manifest himself in the great work of the redemption of mankind, by a miraculous interposition of his grace, in the person, character and life of Christ, and by the prophecies which preceded, and the miracles which attended and followed his presence on the earth. On the other hand, Mr. Parker appears to have gathered from the Scriptures no impressions of the kind, but to have been able to trace through the same periods of time, so much only of truth, as required the simple agency of nature in her common course to bring about, ascribing all appearances or pretensions besides to superstition or imposture.

“The doctrines of these Churches are so opposed to those of Mr. Parker as to be deemed irreconcilable, and to rest on a wholly different basis of assumed truth. It is not surprising therefore that they should have declined to invite Mr. Parker to their pulpits. And since his views have been distinctly avowed, in their whole length and breadth, he has never been called to officiate in any of them with but one exception.

“This same Fraternity of Churches associated themselves under this appellation, for the purpose, solely, of providing, by stated means, for the religious education of the poor, as a distinct class, and instituted the Ministry at Large to carry out their views. How then can it ever be thought consistent with the benevolent design of these Churches, to call Mr. Parker to officiate in the Chapels, when their pastors deem themselves unauthorized to admit him into their own pulpits? If they have fear of injury to their own flocks, shall they be supposed to entertain no dread of consequences to the poor from a like exposure? It cannot be.

“Whenever, therefore, either through the want of vigilance on the part of the Executive Committee, or a temporary absence of discretion on the part of a minister of one of the Chapels, Mr. Parker shall, as a teacher, gain access to the poor through the Chapels, we must believe that as an immediate consequence, the confidence of the Brethren of the Fraternity in the usefulness of this ministry will receive a shock, and that there will be reason to apprehend that the stream of a liberal bounty in many a pious and benevolent bosom, will be diverted into other channels, and our accustomed means of maintaining an institution hitherto so promising and so beneficent be seriously impaired, and perhaps fail altogether. Fears of the sort are at this very moment not without some grounds. For since it has gone abroad that Mr. Parker has been admitted to the pulpit in Suffolk Street Chapel, not a few of the best friends of the institution have expressed themselves much grieved; and judging of others by these, it seems but reasonable to conclude, that if Mr. Parker were again called to minister in one of our Chap-

els, a very general mistrust of the usefulness of this ministry would prevail.

“The general control of the ministrations of the Chapels rests, by the provisions of the Constitution, in the Executive Committee. With every disposition to leave to the ministers the regulation of their exchanges as their convenience may dictate, there is properly some limit to be put to this discretion; but the exceptions embrace only extreme cases, like that of Mr. Parker, which, taken in connexion with the course of the remarks above, is obviously a very proper exception. Under their responsibility, as derived from the Constitution, the Executive Committee will give assurances to the Fraternity, that that gentleman shall not again occupy the pulpit in either of the Chapels, until they are otherwise instructed by some higher authority. As to what is the duty of the Ministers at Large in this regard, it is obviously pointed out by what has been stated to be the duty of the Executive Committee; and familiar as are this Committee with the untiring labors and devotion of heart and life of the actual ministers, they cannot for a moment doubt the readiness of these gentlemen to coöperate hereafter with the Committee and with the Fraternity in any measures they may deem expedient, as bearing on the prosperity of the institution.

“In behalf of the Executive Committee.

J. I. T. COOLIDGE, *Sec'y.*”

Nov. 22d, 1844.

Before this document was sent, however, before any communication, verbal or written, had passed between the Committee and Mr. Sargent, or an intimation

of the action of the Committee could have been given, the following letter was received from him, November 23d, resigning his office :—

BOSTON, Nov. 23d, 1844.

*To the Executive Committee of the }
Fraternity of Churches. }*

GENTLEMEN :— Having understood, with much regret, and from good authority, that my recent exchange with Rev. Mr. Parker has given great offence to several friends of the Ministry at Large, and to yourselves among the rest, and that it is likely to aggravate feelings of disaffection already existing, and being unwilling that any action of mine should longer be the cause of embarrassment to this ministry, I respectfully resign my office.

I am prompted to this course, not only by the sense of duty to yourselves which I entertain under the circumstances, but by the earnest admonition of those friends to this ministry, who have thought and said that I ought no longer to continue this connexion, unless I am willing to pledge myself in this matter of exchanges. Such a pledge would be, as it seems to me, only embarrassing to all concerned, and might as well exclude the Orthodox and Universalist ministers with whom I have also exchanged.

If the community, or any considerable portion of it are really disposed to identify this action of mine with the Fraternity or their Committee, and thus place the Fraternity in the awkward predicament of seeming to countenance heretical views, then I am very much deceived, as I am very much disappointed; and, still further, if the Fraternity, or even a majority of that beneyolent association entertain the deliberate opinion, that, by such pro-

ceeding of mine, the real and spiritual interests of this ministry are absolutely put in jeopardy, and therefore they will no longer support it, then I ought immediately to retire, and no longer, by remaining, seem to falsify the principles and position of that Fraternity while I cloud its prospects. No. I cannot, I ought not to remain under such circumstances, and, much as I regret that any act of mine should have wounded the feelings of those I respect, I fear that no promises for the future, (even though I could give any other than to do my best for the ministry) would ever restore either the ministry or myself to their favor. You may well suppose, Gentlemen, that I would not intentionally have done anything to cripple or prejudice the great cause to which, for seven years or more, I have given my time and strength, nor can I now perceive that the action so obnoxious in regard to Mr. Parker, has any very threatening aspect towards the real claims of this ministry. But there are those who think differently it seems, and to their wisdom I would fain defer. My only consolation is, under the displeasure of these friends, that I have acted from conscientious motives, though this consideration may not satisfy the wounded feelings which anticipate so many serious consequences from the act in question. I have, therefore, no alternative but to relieve both you and them and myself, by retiring from a position which has now become one of perplexity.

I respectfully ask, therefore, that my disconnection with the ministry may take effect on the first of January next, or as much sooner as your Committee may think best. I mention the first of January, so that meanwhile the Fraternity may have some time to make other arrange-

ments for Suffolk Street Chapel ; — and let me also assure you, Gentlemen, that, even after my retirement, so long as I may remain resident at the south end, this ministry shall be welcome to such gratuitous aid as I can render ; and, as it has ever had my patient efforts and affections, albeit through some indiscretions and obliquities, so it shall ever have, to my dying day, my earnest and heart-felt prayers.

With great respect I am yours, &c.

JOHN T. SARGENT.

The Executive Committee immediately met again, November 25th, at which it was “ *Voted*, That the communication already prepared be sent to the Ministers at Large, and that in connexion with it the Secretary send to Mr. Sargent the following vote, expressing the unwillingness of the Committee to receive his resignation, and their hope that he will withdraw it.”

“ *Voted*, That the Secretary, in addition to the copy of the paper directed to be sent to the Ministers at Large at the last meeting, make to Mr. Sargent the further communication : That on account of the uneasiness in the minds of some of the friends of the Ministry at Large, on learning that Mr. Parker had officiated at Suffolk Street Chapel the Sabbath before the last, a meeting of the Executive Committee was held on the 21st instant, and the subject fully discussed, and it was concluded that a paper should be drawn up expressive of the views of the Committee, and a copy sent to each of the Ministers ; and at an adjourned meeting on the 22d instant, a draft of such a document was submitted and adopted. That

the Committee cannot but hope that Mr. Sargent will, on perusing this paper, readily acquiesce in the views of the Committee, and be not unwilling to be guided by them, and that he will consent to withdraw his letter of resignation; well knowing that it must be far from desirable to the Committee that he should retire from a ministry, the duties of which he has so long discharged with distinguished credit to himself and advantage to the public. And especially after being assured that it would be a source of pain and deep regret that the particular cause to which his letter relates, should be the occasion of his separation from this good work."

To this the following reply was received from Mr. Sargent, reviewing the communication and renewing his resignation :

BOSTON, Nov. 29, 1844.

*To the Executive Committee of }
the Fraternity of Churches. }*

GENTLEMEN : — Your communications relative to my exchange with Mr. Parker, and the action you have had thereon, have only confirmed me in the feeling and resolution I expressed in a previous letter, that I ought now to retire from this ministry. It is plain from these communications, that the prejudice against me, in consequence of this act, is no mere temporary feeling, but a somewhat inexorable disaffection. The conviction is one from which I can no longer escape, that, were I now to remain in this ministry, it could only be by a continued collision with a serious and weighty prejudice, which I could hardly hope to overcome. The sympathy or as-

sistance I should henceforth receive would be but a matter of constraint and reservation, given grudgingly, in consequence of the past, and thus the soul of my occupation, so far as the hearty good will of my constituents is concerned, would seem to be enervated and eaten out.

There are some persons of so inflexible a prejudice, that they can never believe anything good of him who has once gone counter to their wills, and with such men, it would seem, no act of the offender for the future can atone for the past. The reserve of such individuals would only be as the chilling influence of ice upon my heart. It is high time, therefore, that I should be no longer as a rock of offence in the way of such men's charity, but rather make way, soon, for some one else to come and heal the wounds which I have so unhappily made. I appreciate the great concern you seem to feel for the more faithful and wise discharge of this sacred trust,—"the Ministry at Large." I would honor, as it deserves, that serious conviction of responsibility which you express in your letter, and I trust you will allow me to claim similar consideration for the motives which have ever influenced me, whether in the past or present. I am free to say, I have no more sympathy than yourselves, with many of the prominent and peculiar views of Mr. Parker, but I hold that, as liberal Christians, we stand in a somewhat peculiar position in this matter of Christian fellowship,—a position which, for the sake of consistency, we ought more fully to define, or maintain, or forsake. But I will not follow this argument any further now. Suffice it to say, your letter amounts to a solemn remonstrance against that position. I discern upon your letter, and through every line of it, the most fervent and Christian anxiety,

lest through my means, or any other, this ministry should experience default or failure; and, while I share this concern, and while I see and reverence this spirit in your letter, I hope you will allow me respectfully and seriously to consider some of its positions. It is there stated, that "all the pastors of those Churches forming 'the Fraternity,' and a vast proportion of their congregations, if not all, believe that the leading views of Mr. Parker are radically erroneous and subversive of the authority of Scripture." How happens it then, that so many in those congregations are so athirst to hear those very views, and that some one or more of those very *pastors* are said to hold views analogous or identical with these, though not publicly proclaimed, and that some stand ready to exchange with Mr. Parker at any time he pleases, while others, still, are *willing* so to do *if their people will consent*.

Again, "the doctrines of these Churches, it is said, are so opposed to those of Mr. Parker as to be deemed irreconcilable." And so are the doctrines of Brattle Street Church irreconcilable and opposed to those of Dr. Beecher and Mr. Kirk and and Dr. Hamilton, and yet the pulpit of Brattle Street Church has been occupied by such ministers, and by some who are *not* ministers, time and again. Once more, the Committee say that, "since the views of Mr. Parker have been distinctly avowed, in their whole length and breadth, he has never been called to officiate in any of the pulpits of the Fraternity, with but one exception." (I submit, here, whether *two* exceptions have not been presented, — namely, those of Rev. Mr. Pierpont and Mr. Clarke,) but suppose it only *one*, and then, how singular in this respect,

is the parallel between Rev. Mr. Parker's experience and that of Mr. Pierpont. Of the latter, also, it may be said, that, since the decision of a Council, more than three years ago, pronouncing him under censure, "he has never been called to officiate in any one of those same pulpits *with but one exception*," (that of Dr. Gannett). So report says, and what are we to argue from this? Surely it is not pretended that Mr. Pierpont is *theologically* a heretic. There must, therefore, be some other reason for the exclusion in his case. Allow me to ask whether the same rule which would exclude Mr. Parker from Suffolk Street Chapel, because he is excluded from the pulpits of your Fraternity, would not also close the door of that Chapel against Mr. Pierpont? If so, and the prejudice of the several pastors in your churches must be the criterion or condition of my fellowship or exchange with others, then I should prefer to vacate a pulpit so constrained. It seems to me the Committee present something like this issue, when they ask — "How can it be thought consistent with the benevolent design of these Churches, to call Mr. Parker to officiate in the Chapels when their pastors deem themselves unauthorized to admit him into their own pulpits?" It is evident, then, from the whole tenor of their letter, that the Committee expect of me a formal pledge of exclusion in regard to Mr. Parker, for they say, finally, — "Under their responsibility, as derived from the constitution, the Executive Committee will give assurance to the Fraternity that that gentleman shall not again occupy the pulpit in either of the Chapels, until they are otherwise instructed by some higher authority;" and to that higher authority, gentlemen, if it exist in the "Central Board" or the

*For reply to the above
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Fraternity at large, I might, perhaps, appeal with something like a belief that no sentence of exclusion with regard to any Unitarian minister would be by them established or confirmed, — but I am willing to consider that, as you claim discretionary power, so your decision is sufficiently final and irrevocable.

But I cannot, as it seems to me, with any propriety or consistency, bind myself, in any formal manner, to the assurances or prejudices of other persons. I would much sooner take the pledge in some other form, as thus, that, in future no Unitarian minister, so claiming to be, and no member of the "Boston Association" shall be admitted to the pulpit in Suffolk Street, and this would sufficiently exclude Mr. Parker, — but, beyond this, I can only say, the ministrations of that pulpit ought to be left, as they ever have been, by your liberality, to my own discretion, according as my judgment may reap motives from the future or wisdom from the past.

With great respect, I am, Gentlemen, &c.,

JOHN T. SARGENT.

Another meeting of the Committee was held December 5th, to act upon this letter, and a sub-committee appointed to take the matter into consideration, and report a suitable reply. That Committee reported to the next meeting, held December 7th, the following answer, which was accepted, signed, and ordered to be sent.

Boston, Dec. 7th, 1844.

Rev. Mr. Sargent, —

SIR : — We have received your communication of the 29th ult., renewing the resignation of your office as Min-

ister of Suffolk Street Chapel. We regret that your conceptions of your position and duties as minister of that Chapel differ so widely from our own. From the views heretofore expressed by yourself to the Board, we had reason to anticipate your cheerful acquiescence in the suggestions made in our communication. We regret, also, that the character of your letter of the 29th, is such as to preclude the hope of any different or useful result by any comment or answer we might make to it. We therefore have no alternative but to accept your resignation, which we hereby do, to take effect as you propose, on the first day of January next. Still holding in grateful remembrance, as both we and those we represent have ever done, your services in behalf of this ministry, and tendering to you our sincere wishes for your future usefulness and welfare, —

We remain your friends,

RICHARD SULLIVAN.

THOMAS TARBELL.

J. I. T. COOLIDGE.

H. B. ROGERS.

S. K. LOTHROP.

The Committee deeply regret that aught should have occurred to injure or embarrass the beneficent action of the Fraternity. The Institution was never in so prosperous a condition. The debt with which it had long been encumbered, was removed. The Chapels were established in the favorable regard of the community. A new laborer was added to prosecute its great work of Christian benevolence; and every appearance seemed to promise years of unbroken and unexampled success and

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*For reply to the above
see Courier & Tribune of Jan'y 15th*

prosperity. This event, as unlooked for as it is unhappy, has cast a cloud upon its prospects. The Committee have acted in the matter as in their judgment the best interests of the Fraternity seemed to demand, and in no spirit other than becomes the guardians of a Christian enterprise. They anticipated and desired no such result. They anticipated no such result because they considered what Mr. Sargent had said to some members of the Fraternity, on the occasion of a previous exchange with Mr. Parker, to be an assurance that it should not occur again — and because they knew that the sentiments expressed in their first communication in regard to Mr. Parker, were in accordance with views expressed without dissent, to Mr. Parker himself, by the Ministerial Association, of which Mr. Sargent is a member.* That they desired no such result, the tone of that communication and the vote with which it was accompanied to Mr. Sargent fully declare. They were willing, and would have been pleased to have conferred longer with Mr. Sargent, and to have endeavored to arrive at a conclusion, which should have been mutually acceptable. But the character of his last communication, opening only a wide field of endless discussion, and presenting certain charges to which the Committee did not feel themselves authorized to attempt a reply, seemed to preclude the hope of a different result from the present, and

* This was done at a meeting held the 23rd day of January, 1843, Mr. Parker being present by agreement, and his views and writings being the appointed subject of discussion. At this meeting of the Association, all the Boston members, with the exception of Mr. Pierpont, were present. Rev. J. F. Clarke was not at that time a member of the Association.

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leave them no other alternative than to accept his resignation.

Mr. Sargent's resignation taking place on the first of January, the Committee have secured temporarily the services of Rev. Joseph Harrington, Jr.

The Committee recently received the following paper from Rev. Mr. Waterston, on the subject of their communication addressed to the ministers at large.

BOSTON, JAN. 3d, 1845.

*To the Executive Committee of }
the Fraternity of Churches. }*

GENTLEMEN:—Your communication of Nov. 22d, was duly received, and, on reflection, I consider it a duty which I owe to myself, as well as to you, to state my views of the subject upon which you have written. Any measure which interferes with the proper liberty of the pulpit, I believe should be sacredly resisted, and anything like unchristian exclusion should be met with an earnest protest. If I believed that either of these was intended by the Committee I should feel the deepest regret, but I am confident that nothing could be more at variance with the real feelings of the Committee, as it certainly would be with all their former proceedings.

Much is justly said of the Liberty of the Pulpit; but I have never understood that in advocating such liberty, we were thereby bound to open the pulpit door to all persons who might be ready to speak, however crude or pernicious we might consider their views. There is certainly some limit. Who ever thought that all mankind were to be welcomed into our churches, to proclaim their

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convictions,—however honest? I do not recognize any new feature, at the present time, from what we have always maintained respecting liberality of sentiment and the freedom of the pulpit. I have never understood that the exercise of liberality was to be always tested by willingness to exchange pulpits, but rather by the exercise of candor and justice, in weighing the opinions of those from whom we differ, and in allowing that views which we consider seriously erroneous may be honestly held, and that if those who hold them live a godly life, and are faithful to the highest idea they can obtain, they will be accepted of God. In the step taken by the Committee I do not understand them to have departed from this broad idea.

265/ In regard to the case before us, I feel bound to state in justice to my own convictions, the principle upon which I have acted during the five years of my ministry. I have endeavored to keep my mind ever open to the reception of truth; and by a prayerful study of the scripture, and with the use of such powers as God has given me, I have sought to arrive at just conclusions respecting truth and duty; and I have also sought to look upon all who have come to a different result, with christian kindness and candor. Still (while I would allow to every one freedom of thought) I have a respect for my own convictions; and I believe, as I believe I live, in the great facts and truths recorded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When therefore I hear another maintain that the miracles of Jesus are but “myths and fables”; — that the Saviour himself was frequently “mistaken”; — that “the writers of the Gospels might represent him as teaching what he did not teach”; — when it is unqualifiedly asserted that

“ the Evangelists have mingled with their story puerile notions, and tales which it is charitable to call absurd ” ; — when a belief in the Lord’s Resurrection is distinctly denied ; — when the account given in the New Testament of his subsequent history is asserted to be “ impossible ” ; — and when those who have faith in the Gospel Record are spoken of in tones of sarcasm and abuse, I cannot feel that any true view of spiritual liberty should lead us to throw open our own pulpits purposely, that such speculations and assertions may be scattered abroad.

Mr. Parker says, in his publications, that he looks upon the Christianity of the Church as “ little better than heathenism.” He and his friends would, perhaps, call it persecution, if a similar freedom of speech were used respecting his views. He says that “ genius and talent forsake the rotten walls of the Church, to build up elsewhere the Church of the first-born.” Not satisfied with denying the intended permanency of the Christian rites of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, alluding to those who still revere them, he sneeringly exclaims,

“ Behold the child by Nature’s kindly law,
Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw.”

More than once he indignantly rejects the thought of Christ either as a Master or a Mediator. The statements of the Evangelists have, to him, “ but a low degree of historical credibility.” The miracles, by them recorded, are called “ Monstrous prodigies ” ; and as a philosophical explanation of such prodigies, it is said, “ the Mormonite finds miracles to-day, — will not the same cause, whatever it be, help to explain the visions of

Paul, the angels, and the miracles of the New Testament?"

I will not deny that a man has a right to hold such views, however unreasonable they may seem, or that, if he will, by pen and by speech he may proclaim them, and, with a zeal worthy a better cause, seek to make proselytes. But I do not understand that it is the test of an enlarged or enlightened liberality, for those who deem such views untrue and injurious to wish them declared from their pulpits. If one man has a right to hold such views, others certainly have an equal right to reject them, and to reject them freely and fearlessly, as, in their belief, unscriptural and untrue. There may be much display of rhetorical skill, and expressions of great beauty, and evidences of varied research, yet if, either in plain or in poetic diction, the miracles recorded in the Gospels, are declared to be "fabulous and absurd," then the sacred volume is represented as irretrievably entangled with misrepresentations and falsehoods; and I should hardly suppose, that it would be considered persecution, if the holder of such opinions should not be urged to proclaim them within what he calls, "the rotten walls of the Church." There are some in the community who seem to consider that the independence or sincerity of a Christian Minister is to be doubted, if he does not welcome these doctrines into his pulpit. I believe such a thought can find a home in few breasts, except such as are strangers to the views themselves.

Believing, as I do, that the Christian Revelation is indissolubly connected not only with the character, but with the supernatural works of its Author, and that the miracles of Christ were among the most beautiful and

divine mediums by which he expressed his beneficence, and through which he conveyed to the world much of his Spiritual Truth; — seeing, as I do, that these are woven together from the beginning to the end, in harmony with all, and perfecting all, I feel that I could not dis sever them, if I would, and I would not if I could. And I am free to say that my present feelings are opposed not only to the views themselves, but to taking any active steps (as I feel that I should do by opening my pulpit for them) to have them diffused through the community. I believe them utterly false, and I could not, therefore, as a lover of God and the Truth, seek their promotion.

Very respectfully,

R. C. WATERSTON.

All which is respectfully submitted for the Committee,
J. I. T. COOLIDGE, *Secretary*.

At a full meeting of the Fraternity, held on Sunday, January 5th, the above Report was presented, and the following votes passed with two dissenting voices.

“ *Voted*, That this Board entirely approve the proceedings of the Executive Committee in relation to the resignation of Rev. Mr. Sargent.”

“ *Voted*, That the Report be accepted and printed under the direction of the Executive Committee.”

divine medium by which he expressed his presence, and through which he conveyed to the world much of his spiritual truth;—saying, as I do, that there are many together from the beginning to the end, in harmony with all, and perfecting all, I feel that I could not desert them, if I would, and I would not if I could. And I am free to say that my presence is not required not only to the views themselves, but to taking any action (as I feel that I should do by opening my pupils for them) to have them directed through the community. I believe them entirely false, and I would not, therefore, as a lover of God and the Truth, seek their preservation.

Very respectfully,

J. E. W. Watson.

All which is respectfully submitted for the Committee.
J. E. W. Watson, Secretary.

At a full meeting of the Yearning, held on Sunday, January 21, the above Report was presented, and the following votes passed with one dissenting voice:

"Voted, That the Board entirely approve the proceedings of the Executive Committee in relation to the resignation of Rev. Mr. Buzant."

"Voted, That the Report be accepted and printed under the direction of the Executive Committee."







